

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5153

INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BRASILIA 3425

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR MPOL AR BR

SUBJECT: BRASILIAN NAVY MINISTER VISIT TO ARGENTINA AND
SOUTH ATLANTIC SECURITY

REF: BUENOS AIRES 2463

SUMMARY: BRAZILIAN PRESS ALSO STRESSED SOUTH ATLANTIC SECURITY AS PRINCIPAL AND IMPORTANT TOPIC OF HENNING VISIT. UPON RETURN, HENNING HIMSELF DOWNPLAYED THAT ANGLE WHILE STRIKING POSITIVE NOTE ON POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN ARGENTINA. PRESS REPORTS BASED ON FOREIGN MINISTRY DENIAL THAT BRAZIL WOULD RAISE SOUTH ATLANTIC SECURITY AT OAS GA INCLUDED ASSERTION THAT GOB CONSIDERS EXISTING ARRANGEMENTS SATISFACTORY. TALKING TO EMBOFF, WELL-PLACED FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL DOWNPLAYED SIGNIFICANCE OF VISIT, SAID FOR BRAZIL SOUTH ATLANTIC SITUATION NOT CHANGED BY EVENTS IN ANGOLA, AND ASSERTED ANY INCREASE IN SOVIET NAVAL CAPABILITIES WAS FOR USG TO COUNTER. EMBASSY SEES GOB INTEREST IN AFRICA AS CONTINUING TO PREVAIL OVER CONCERNS OF BRAZILIAN NAVY AND SOME NEWSPAPERS, WHICH ARE LESS RELAXED THAN FOREIGN MINISTRY OVER SOUTH ATLANTIC
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SECURITY. END SUMMARY.

1. BRAZILIAN PRESS ALSO STRESSED SOUTH ATLANTIC SECURITY AS PRINCIPAL AND IMPORTANT TOPIC OF HENNING VISIT, (APRIL 4-9) SIMILARY CITING EVENTS IN ANGOLA, INCREASED IMPORTANCE OF SOUTH ATLANTIC STEMMING FROM CLOSING OF SUEZ CANAL, AND EASE WITH WHICH PANAMA CANAL COULD BE BLOCKED AS ELEMENTS HEIGHTENING INTEREST IN SUBJECT. ESTADO DE SAO APULO REPORTED TREATMENT GIVEN BY LA NACION AND CLARIN (AND EL CRONISTA) AND CONCLUDED STORY, "FOR OFFICIAL CIRCLES, THE VISIT WENT BEYOND A PURELY PROTOCOLARY PROGRAM AND OPINIONS ARE UNANIMOUS WITH REGARD TO THE HYPOTHESIS THAT IT WAS A MATTER OF A VISIT TO UPDATE THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF THE SOUTH ATLANTIC." JORNAL DO BRASIL, IN REPORT FROM BUENOS AIRES, CITED "MILITARY SOURCES" AND "WELL-INFORMED SOURCES" IN TAKING SIMILAR LINE, AND ALSO SAID THAT "SIGNIFICANTLY" HENNING'S VISIT "WAS PARALLEL TO THAT OF ADMIRALS JAMES SAGERHOLM AND GEORGE ELLIS" (FUTURE AND CURRENT COMSOLANT, RESPECTIVELY, IN BUENOS AIRES FOR UNITAS XVII PLANNING). QUOTING OBSERVERS TO EFFECT THAT HENNING VISIT "WILL CERTAINLY SERVE TO GIVE OPERATIONALITY" TO A TEN-YEAR-OLD ARGENTINE-BRAZILIAN "TREATY FOR THE DEFENSE OF INTER-AMERICAN MARTITIME TRAFFIC IN CASE OF WORLD CONFLICT," JORNAL NOTED SOUTH AFRICA WAS OTHER SOUTH ATLANTIC COUNTRY "ALLIED WITH THE WEST" BUT THAT POSSIBILITY OF SOUTH AFRICAN PARTICIPATION WAS "OPEN QUESTION BECAUSE-- ESPECIALLY FOR BRAZIL--OF THE NEGATIVE REPERCUSSIONS ON AFRICAN COUNTRIES OF AN ALLIANCE WITH THE PRETORIA REGIM."

2. ON REETURNING TO BRAZIL, HENNING WAS QUOTED TO EFFECT THAT VISIT WAS TO RETURN THAT MADE BY ADMIRAL MASSERA, THAT HE FOUND IT "ADMIRABLE HOW THE ARGENTINES RECEIVED THE CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT," AND THAT HE GATHERED "THE BEST IMPRESSIONS OF EVERYTHING." JORNAL DO BRASIL ALSO REPORTED HE "DENIED THAT HE HAD GONE TO DISCUSS MATTERS RELATED TO THE SOUTH ATLANTIC TREATY" (SIC).

3. FOLLOWING PUBLICATION OF PRESS REPORTS THAT BRAZIL WOULD RAISE "THE NECESSITY OF ELABORATING A NAVAL STRATEGY FOR THE SOUTH ATLANTIC" AT THE UPCOMING OAS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, VARIOUS NEWSPAPERS CARRIED DENIAL ATTRIBUTED CONFIDENTIAL

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TO FOREIGN MINISTER SILVEIRA. REPORTS ALSO INCLUDED DENIAL OF ANY IDEA OF "FORMALIZING A SECURITY PACT FOR THE SOUTH ATLANTIC." ACCORDING TO FOLHA DE SAO PAULO, USUALLY WELL-INFORMED ON FOREIGN MINISTRY MATTERS, SILVEIRA SAID EXISTING ARRANGEMENTS (STORY CITED RIO TREATY, UNITAS, AND OPERATIONS SPRINGBOARD AND VERITAS) ARE SATISFACTORY. FOLHA ADDED THAT BRAZIL "IS INTERESTED IN CONSTANTLY IMPROVING ITS TRAINING PROGRAMS AS WELL AS ITS

NVAL STRATEGY IN THE AREA, BUT FROM THE POLITICAL POINT OF VIEW, IT GRINDS TO A HALT ON COMPLEX PROBLEMS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE OCEAN." RECOGNIZING SOUTH AFRICA'S MILITARY STRENGTH AND STRATEGIC LOCATION, STORY SAYS THAT NEVERTHELESS CONSIDERATIONS OF OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRIES MAN THAT "BRAZIL WILL NOT ENTER INTO ANY TYPE OF PACT OR UNDERSTANDING IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC WHICH INVOLVES THE PARTICIPATION OF THE PRETORIA GOVERNMENT." STORY ALSO SAID THAT BRAZIL WOULD NOT LIKE TO CRITICIZE "CUBAN SUPPORT OF AGOSTINHO NETO BECAUSE, AFTER ALL, BRAZIL FROM THE OUTSET RECOGNIZED THE MPLA GOVERNMENT, THE RECIPIENT OF THAT ASSISTANCE."

4. IN TALK WITH EMBOFF, LA MAN ON SILVEIRA'S STAFF SAID HENNING HAD GONE TO RETURN MASSERA'S VISIT AND HAD PREVIOUSLY-- AND PRIOR TO THE COUP--BEEN GIVEN MESSAGE THAT "POLITICAL PROBLEMS" SHOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED OBSTACLE TO VISIT. INCLUDED IN MESSAGE, ACCORDING TO OFFICIAL, WAS IMPLICIT UNDERSTANDING ("SUBENTENDIMENTO") THAT REFERENCE WAS TO IMMINENT COUP. WHILE THERE, OFFICIAL SAID, HENNING INDEED DISCUSSED SOUTH ATLANTIC SECURITY MATTERS, BUT ONLY ON A NAVY-TO-NAVY BASIS AND "NOT AT THE POLICY LEVEL." DOWNPLAYING SIGNIFICANCE OF SUCH TALKS, OFFICIAL SAID TOPIC IS ROUTINE ONE FOR SUCH MEETINGS, AND ASKED, "WHAT ELSE ARE THEY GOING TO TALK ABOUT?"

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5. SPEAKING IN SAME VEIN HE HAS BEFORE, OFFICIAL ASSERTED THAT ANY THREAT POSED BY IMPROVED SOVIET CAPABILITY IN SOUTH ATLANTIC--WHICH HE ASCRIBED TO GROWTH OF SOVIET NAVAL STRENGTH AND NOT TO POTENTIAL SOVIET ACCESS TO BASES OR FACILITIES IN AREA--WAS FOR USG TO COUNTER. NEITHER BRAZIL NOR ARGENTINA NOR THE TWO TOGETHER, HE SAID, HAD ANY MEANS OF STANDING OFF THE SOVIETS. ACKNOWLEDGING THAT BRAZIL HAS INTERESTS TO PROTECT IN THE AREA, OFFICIAL SAID IT NEEDS NO ADDITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS TO DO WHAT IT CAN IN THAT RESPECT. FOR BRAZIL, HE SAID, SITUATION IN SOUTH ATLANTIC WAS NOT CHANGED BY EVENTS IN ANGOLA.

6. COMMENT: BRAZILIAN INTEREST IN THE AFRICAN COUNTRIES, FOR THEMSELVES, FOR THEIR OPEC LINKS, AND FOR THEIR THIRD-WORLD, "AUTOMATIC MAJORITY" WEIGHT, AS WELL AS NATIONAL BANNER OF MULTIRACIAL SOCIETY, STIMULATE GOB TO KEEP BRAZILIAN-SOUTH AFRICAN RELATIONS COOL AND CORRECT AT BEST. THAT THEY ARE EVEN AS GOOD AS THEY ARE--OR THAT THEY EXIST AT ALL--HAS USUALLY BEEN ATTRIBUTED TO TRADE INTERESTS, AND TO RECOGNITION (ALTHOUGH UNSPOKEN) BY THE GOB OF ITS SECURITY INTEREST WITH REGARD TO SOUTH AFRICA. THIS CONFIDENTIAL

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IS IN KEEPING WITH THE MORE GENERAL BRAZILIAN GEOPOLITICAL IDEA THAT BRAZIL'S EASTERN BORDER IS THE WEST COAST OF AFRICA. TRADITIONALLY, THE BRAZILIAN NAVY HAS FAVORED IMPROVEMENT OF RELATIONS WITH SOUTH AFRICA, BUT WE SEE NO SIGNS THAT THE GOB IS MOVING IN THAT DIRECTION, AND INDEED ITS EMPHASIS ON BLACK AFRICA IS IF ANYTHING INCREASING.

7. THAT EMPHASIS IS, OF COURSE, RELATED TO THE PROSPECTS THE GOB SEES FOR THE REALIZATION, AT LONG LAST, OF ITS ASPIRATIONS FOR A SPECIAL POSITION IN THE FORMER PORTUGUESE TERRITORIES, ASPIRATIONS WHICH LEAD IT TO PUT ASIDE IDEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS THAT MIGHT OTHERWISE CARRY SOME WEIGHT. THERE DOES SEEM TO BE, THEN, THIS DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GOB AND GOA OUTLOOKS ON ANGOLA, ALTHOUGH THE GOB IS CONCERNED ABOUT POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA.

8. SOMEWHAT SIMILARLY, THERE HAVE BEEN SIGNS FOR SOME TIME THAT THE BRAZILIAN NAVY IS NOT AS RELAXED AS THE FOREIGN MINISTRY OVER THE EFFECTS OF ANGOLA ON SOUTH ATLANTIC SECURITY, AND FOR DIFFERENT REASONS, BOTH ESTADO AND JORNAL DO BRASIL HAVE ALSO EDITORIALIZED RECENTLY IN FAVOR OF INCREASED BRAZILIAN ATTENTION TO THE MATTER. (IN

ADDITION TO SUEZ, PANAMA, AND ANGOLA FACTORS MENTIONED ABOVE, ESTADO CITED FALTERING US WILL TO RESIST SOVIET EXPANSION, WHILE JORNAL SAW US RECOGNITION OF BRAZIL AS EMERGING POWER AS POSSIBLE SIGN US EXPECTED BRAZIL TO TAKE LARGER SHARE OF RESPONSIBILITY.) IN THIS REGARD AS WELL, HOWEVER, THERE ARE NO SIGNS THAT PREVALENCE OF FOREIGN MINISTRY VIEW IS IN ANY IMMEDIATE DANGER.

9. FINAL NOTE: WE HAVE SO FAR BEEN UNABLE TO IDENTIFY BRAZILIAN-ARGENTINE AGREEMENT MENTIONED BY PRESS (PARAS 1 AND 2 ABOVE). WE WILL CONTINUE LOW-KEY EFFORT AND REPORT ANY SIGNIFICANT FINDING. END COMMENT.
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